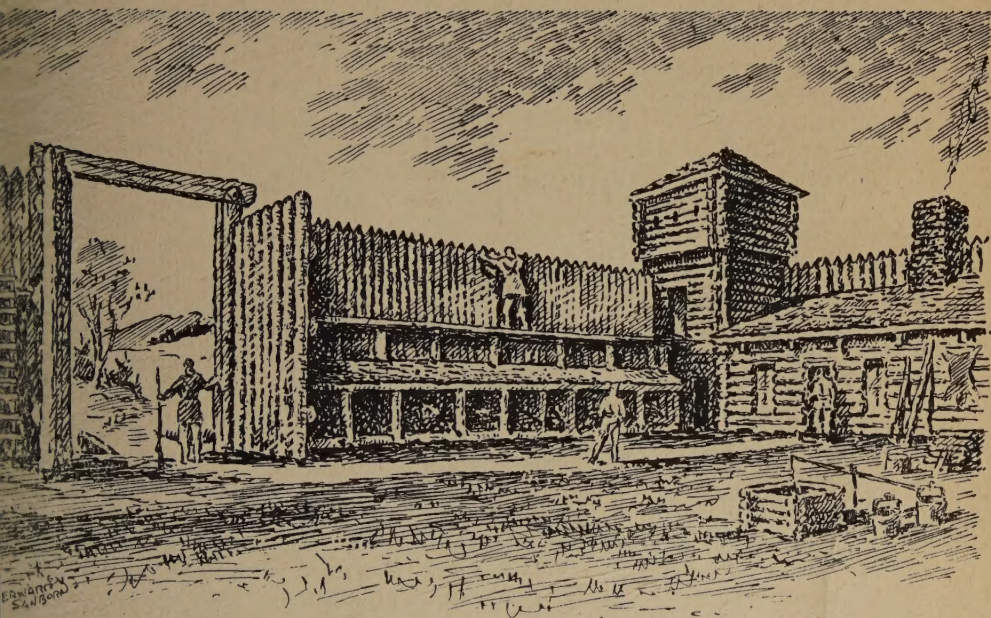


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Indian and Tory Raids

ON THE OTTER VALLEY, 1777-1782

By WYNN UNDERWOOD

THERE were very few Indian raids of any consequence in Vermont prior to the Revolution, but during the war and particularly at the time of Burgoyne's attack from Canada up Lake Champlain, the entire state was threatened. It was in this very year, 1777, that the small towns bordering on the Lake and even those as far east as the foot hills of the Green Mountains were in eminent danger.

Fort Ticonderoga and the fort at Crown Point, both on the opposite shore of the Lake, were the key outposts of the Continental Army and made up the only arm of defense extending into the great northern frontier and wilderness. Other than these two strongholds the towns depended upon their militia, made up almost completely of the townspeople themselves. Every man between the ages of 16 and 50 was required to bear arms and attend muster and military exercise—only ministers, judges, etc. were exempt.¹

Every soldier and householder were required by law to have ready "a well fixed firelock, the barrel not less than three feet and one half long, or other good firearms . . . a good sword, cutlass, tomahawk or bayonet; a worm and priming-wire for each gun; a cartouch-pouch or powder horn, and bullet pouch; one pound of good powder; four pounds of bullets for his gun; and good flints."²

There were no forts in the Otter Valley at this time in the Spring of 1777³ and as Burgoyne's army marched southward almost unchecked in his campaign against Crown Point and Fort Ticonderoga, any hopes the Vermont settlers had for protection were fading. As Burgoyne's line of supply became longer and more hazardous, he was

1. Hall, Benjamin H., *History of Eastern Vermont*. N.Y. 1858, p. 581.

2. Hall, Benjamin H., *ibid.*, p. 581.

3. Fort Mott at Pittsford was not built until the Fall of 1777 and Fort Ranger at Center Rutland until 1778.

forced to send scouting and foraging parties into the lake shore country. However, he evidently underestimated the loyalty of the Vermonters to the Crown, for his scouting parties were unable to purchase enough food, wagons and forage.

To bring more pressure to bear on the settlers and entice any hesitant Loyalists to his side, he planned a long-term campaign of propaganda. At his camp on the Bouquet River, a little north of Crown Point on the New York side, he prepared a war feast for his Indians which he planned to use as a major part of his war of nerves on the inhabitants of Vermont. These Indians, which he had brought with him from Canada, had been an impediment all the way, as they made up a large part of his army of 10,000 and had to be handled gingerly. They totally lacked the subordination expected from his regulars and mercenaries and Burgoyne feared their ferocity at all times in case they might turn on his own men.⁴

This feast was to prepare the restless savages for the invasion of Vermont and New York in which he hoped to terrorize the people into submission and press more Tories into service for the British army. He evidently knew that his Indians needed no encouragement, but rather a toning down so he spoke before them demanding that they not scalp any of the women, old men or children—only those who actually resisted with arms. He also ordered them not to scalp a wounded or dying man and as a special inducement he offered rewards for prisoners brought in to him.⁵

The Indians were not unleashed immediately after the feast. Burgoyne was waging psychological warfare and he wanted to make known to those who failed to comply with any of his demands that the consequences would be drastic. He issued a note of warning which was probably passed abroad by word of mouth or posted in the form of broadsides. This warning he liked to call his *Manifesto*. It was issued from his camp on Putnam Creek, June 29, 1777 and in it he told of the force of the British armies and fleets and of the savagery of his Indians. He promised security and protection to all those who went about their work quietly and who did not evacuate their cattle and remove their corn and forage. He assured anyone who paid heed to his manifesto that they would be paid in full for feeding the British troops.⁶

4. Botta, Charles, *History of the United States*. New Haven 1834, Vol. I, p. 450.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 450.

6. Botta, Charles, *op. cit.*, p. 451.

The manifesto brought some of the intended results for Burgoyne. Wild rumors spread and following the first few Indian incursions thousands were panicked and picked up their household goods and moved southward.⁷ These first sorties on the Vermont side of the Lake came in the Otter Creek Valley, which was on the direct waterway from Lake Champlain. Moreover, the Crown Point Road⁸ and the Old Indian Trail stretched the length of much of this valley. An Indian attack was reported here as early as June of this year at Salisbury and was launched by a large party. Although the records do not state when in June it is quite possible that this was the first attack to strike the Otter Valley settlements following Burgoyne's manifesto.⁹

Joshua Graves of Salisbury who had already once rebuilt his home burned by Indians the previous year, was hoeing corn with his two boys when they spotted a large party of Indians. There were about 250 of them coming down from the north—some in canoes, and some walking along the Creek bank. They ordered Joshua and Jesse his oldest boy, as well as the youngster, to go along with them. The offering of a reward for prisoners was apparently still fresh in the savages' minds.

The party went on up the Creek as far as a farm which Mr. Weeks termed the Kelsey place and here the Indians stopped long enough to butcher a yoke of oxen which they ate for their evening and morning meal. They then paddled on up the Creek to Jeremiah Parker's farm. The Indians found 200 pounds of maple sugar in the house here which they stole and held a pow-wow over. Parker of course was taken captive and placed in a canoe. The group continued on as far as Neshobe.¹⁰ (Brandon)

At Neshobe an Indian guard took over¹¹ and led the prisoners to Lake Champlain at a point not far from Ticonderoga. The captives

7. Stillwell, Lewis, "Migration from Vermont," in *Proceedings of Vermont Historical Society*, New Series, Vol. V, no. 2, p. 91.

8. This old military road, superimposed upon most of the Indian Trail, connected Number 4 (Charlestown, N.H.) with Fort Ticonderoga and Crown Point. It was completed in 1758 by Lord Jeffrey Amherst.

9. John Weeks describes an Indian raid in Salisbury towards the end of the winter of 1776. At this time Joshua Graves' cabin was burned as well as Widow Story's. The Creek being overflowed, Mrs. Story was able to make an escape by boat. *History of Salisbury*, p. 225.

10. Brandon. The name was changed from Neshobe to Brandon in 1784.

11. Perhaps indicating that Tories or British led this group up until they reached Neshobe.

were put on a British vessel here to be shipped to Montreal. The Indian officer who had been in charge of the rebels demanded of the British his reward for them. However, the British officers considered them peaceful farmers and had them released much to the disgust of the Indian. The four men had to find their own way home as best they could. They were three weeks in getting back.¹²

Burgoyne's offer of a reward for prisoners brought in alive had probably been a deciding factor in saving the lives of these men, for the prisoners stated that the Indians treated them well on their trip and shared their rations—one tablespoonful of pounded parched corn a day. The Indians had plundered very little and stole only what they wanted to eat and they burned no homes.¹³

During the first week in July of 1777 Burgoyne with his army of 10,000 well equipped soldiers, made up largely of Indians, one corps of renegade Tories, and one half German mercenaries, made ready his offensive on Fort Ticonderoga.

General St. Clair was holding the fort for the Americans with a garrison of only 2,540 men. He sent for help and by July 5th Seth Warner arrived with reinforcements consisting of 900 militia. However, in spite of the additional force the odds were too much one way and the Americans were forced to abandon the fort. On July 6th Burgoyne was in command of Ticonderoga and the Americans were making a forced retreat towards Castleton.

That very same day a raiding party of Indians and Tories painted to look like Indians, led by Captain Justus Sherwood, came into Hubbardton and took Benjamin and Uriah Hickcock, Henry Keeler and Elijah Kellogg prisoners. Benjamin Hickcock being a small and very spry man managed to escape when they were all being led back through the thick woods. He returned to his home and on the following night left Hubbardton with his own family and his brother Uriah's family.¹⁴

Either Sherwood remained on top of Hubbardton mountain all night with his prisoners or else sent them back under guard for he appeared lurking about on the day of the battle at Hubbardton. On this day, July 7th, Sherwood managed to take Samuel Churchill and his family by surprise and make them all prisoners. He plundered the house

12. Weeks, John, *History of Salisbury, Vermont*. Middlebury 1860, p. 235.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.

14. Churchill, Amos, *History of Hubbardton, Vt.* Rutland 1855, p. 3; Hemenway, A. M., *Historical Gazetteer of Vt.*, Vol. 3, p. 749.

of all the provisions and clothing that he could find and then ordered the women and children to get out for he was going to burn the house and them in it if they did not obey. The women begged and pleaded and finally Sherwood relented and spared them their house.

Samuel Churchill, however, was led away some distance from the house, tied to a tree and brush piled up around his feet. The raiders then taunted him with shouts of: "Tell us where your flour is, you old rebel!" Sherwood thought that Churchill was holding out on him and had some hidden and so kept him tied to the tree for three or four hours. At the same time they questioned him again and again about his flour and threatened him by touching fire to the brush. At last Sherwood was convinced that Churchill was telling the truth and they left off. They did kill his cattle and hogs, however, and each member of the party was ordered to take as much of the butchered meat as he could carry.¹⁵

Ezekiel Churchill was such a young boy that he was not forced to go with Sherwood and his men, but William Churchill was taken along until they discovered his foot was so lame that he could not travel. Those prisoners in all that were marched back to Fort Ticonderoga were: Samuel Churchill, Silas and John his sons, Uriah Hickcock, Henry Keeler and Elijah Kellogg.¹⁶

All of these prisoners were set to work at Ticonderoga, Churchill and Hickcock were detailed the job of boating wood across Lake Champlain, first working under heavy guard in the daytime and placed in cells at night. But later, when they were more trusted, they worked with only one soldier over them. One day on this wood fatigue Churchill and Hickcock persuaded their soldier guard to desert with them. When they reached the eastern shore, the two Hubbardton men returned to their home in search of their families.¹⁷

Colonels Seth Warner, Hale and Francis were left as a rear guard at Hubbardton by General St. Clair who was retreating with the main body of the troops through Castleton towards Skenesborough.¹⁸ On July 7, 1777 the British caught up with the Americans and one of the bloodiest battles and one of the severest losses felt by the Continental army in the northern campaign was suffered that day at the Battle of Hubbardton. The troops left the field in pell-mell confusion, every man for himself.

15. Hemenway, A. M., *Historical Gazetteer of Vt.*, Vol. 3, pp. 750-751.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 751; Churchill, Amos, *History of Hubbardton*, pp. 5-6.

17. Hemenway, *op. cit.*, p. 751; Churchill, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

18. Whitehall, N.Y.

The people of Neshobe and Pittsford had heard the guns and seen some of the soldiers who had been forced to leave the field and find their way down the wooded mountain to safety. The men of the Otter Valley knew the last stronghold in the north had been lost with the surrender of Fort Ticonderoga and now they knew that Burgoyne's men in Hubbardton meant the war was at their very doorsteps and the entire state a frontier. All night long after the battle women and children and many of the men too, were on the move to safety somewhere southward. Many hid all their valuables in the woods for they did not know when the British might come down over the mountain too. Now the moment was ripe for more psychological warfare, more British propaganda, and Burgoyne seized that moment.¹⁹

On July 10, 1777 he issued and posted his proclamation. "A Proclamation. To the Inhabitants of Castleton, Hubberton, Rutland, Tinmouth, Powlet, Wells, Granville with the neighboring districts; also the districts bearing on White Creek, Cambden, Cambridge, &c. You are hereby directed to send from your several townships, deputies consisting of ten persons or more from each township, to meet Col. Skeene, at Castleton, on Monday, July 15, at 10 in the morning, who will have instructions, not only to give further encouragement to those who complied with the terms of my late manifesto but also to communicate conditions upon which the persons and properties of the disobedient may yet be spared. This fail to obey, under pain of military execution . . ."²⁰

Food, horses and carriages were desperately needed. The manifesto had succeeded in terrorizing the lakeshore towns so completely that they had evacuated hastily and left the region without leaving a thing behind. Even the Loyalists in the area had failed to respond as expected and still more recruits were needed for the British army. Burgoyne found that more stringent methods were needed. He swept farther inland with his terrorism with more raids and more scavenging, striking fear into the hearts of the hesitant Tories and women and children. But at the same time he was stirring up a hatred among these rebels that was to break out in revenge at the Battle of Bennington on August 16, 1777.

Burgoyne had sent Lieutenant-Colonel Baum as well as Reidesel to

19. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford, Vt.* Rutland 1872, p. 118.

20. *Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society*, Concord 1827, Vol. 2, pp. 147-148.

plunder some of the inland towns,²¹ and parties of Tories and British were sent along with his Indian raiders in order to curb their blood-thirsty desires.²²

Late in July or early in August of 1777 many of the inhabitants were still out of the Otter Valley, having evacuated immediately after the Battle of Hubbardton, but one persistent Whig, Nathan Tuttle of Rutland, stayed behind to defy the Tories. Tuttle, who is said to have been a heavy drinker, was drunk when he met up with a party of Indians led by two Tories—Solomon Johns and Gustavus Spencer of Clarendon. Tuttle immediately started a row and dared them to take him. The taunts continued until Johns got so mad he ran Tuttle through with his bayonet and killed him. Spencer and Johns then tied stones to his body and threw it into the Creek below Gookins Falls.²³ After having disposed of the body they all went to Joseph Keeler's house nearby and told him the story, begging him to swear secrecy.

After the war Johns was killed in Canada by a falling tree and so Keeler felt that it was safe to publish the particulars of Tuttle's death.²⁴

Late in September of the same year another foray was made in the Otter Valley as far up as Pittsford taking prisoner fifteen year old Joseph Rowley and his brother John, eleven. Only a few days later another party of Indians took Gideon Shelden, fifteen, and his thirteen year old brother, Thomas. These two boys lived in Whipple Hollow, a bit south of Pittsford.²⁵

Certainly these small boys could have done very little in the way of impeding the progress of the British. Either the Indians found the reward per head held good no matter what size the head, and that children made the easiest prisoners, or else it was part of the psychological warfare, or war of nerves.

The last attack to occur in September was made on Felix Powell's house in Pittsford. It was plundered and then burned to the ground

21. Burgoyne, Lieutenant-General, *A Narrative of the State of the Expedition*. 2nd London Edition 1780, Appendix lxii.

While Burgoyne was making arrangements to take Fort George and Fort Edward by building roads, boats, etc., he sent Captain Reidesel to make feints of a march to the Connecticut River and by other means spread alarm throughout the countryside.

22. *Ibid.*, Appendix xxxviii.

23. The falls in Otter Creek at Center Rutland.

24. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County, Vt.* Syracuse 1886. Footnote to p. 319.

25. Caverly, *History of Pittsford*, p. 122.

in the night. Mrs. Powell managed to flee to safety through a thicket close by.²⁶

Word of these recent incursions spread and a company of soldiers was sent into the region immediately. The company was raised in Clarendon at the advice of the Committee of Safety and was under the command of Captain Abraham Salisbury. The men in the company had been called from the neighboring towns—Neshobe, Pittsford, Clarendon, Rutland, Wallingford, etc.²⁷ and were sent particularly to try and bring back the lost children, but also to protect the inhabitants from further pillage. The Sheldon boys were carried to Canada where Thomas, the youngest of the two and a frail child, died in captivity. Gideon Sheldon and the two Rowley boys were imprisoned for a few months, but were then released and allowed to return home.²⁸

It was only a short time after this alarm that most of the men who had evacuated this area during July had now returned and were discussing the location of a common place of protection. They chose a lot on the east bank of Otter Creek in Pittsford just south of the Neshobe line. Work on the fort began almost immediately. It was surrounded by a breastwork of hemlock logs driven in the ground like posts and pointed at the top. The west side of the breastwork extended down the bank of the Creek so that water could be drawn even if the fort was under siege. The fort was square and covered three quarters of an acre of land with a log house in the center to serve as a block house.²⁹

The fort was named after Deacon John Mott, who lived just north of the fort over the line in Neshobe and who often acted as com-

26. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

27. The following is the roll call of men in Capt. Salisbury's company: Capt. A. Salisbury, Capt. Thomas Sawyer, Sergt. Joseph Smith, Sergt. Jedediah Jackson, Sergt. Jabez Weaver, Sergt. Zebidiah Green, Clerk Asable Blanchard, Sylvanus Brown, Noel Potter, Ebenezer White, Samuel Waters, Thomas Tuttle, Jacob Partridge, Nehemiah Angell, William Cox, Abel Spencer, Thomas Curtis, Edward Owen, Daniel Niles, Benjamin Foster, Oliver Arnold, Jesse Place, John Squire, Peter Tarbox, Nathaniel Place, Abadiah Gill, William Rounds, Joseph Barker, Obediah Edwards, Jona. Eddy, Silas and Silas Whitney, Jr., Benj. Stevens, Joseph Williams, Joel Foster, Peter Eddy, Thos. Eddy, Levi Calvin, David Warner, Azariah Brooks, James Rounds, Matthew Cox, Noah Bush, Wallis Sutherland, Nathaniel Skelter, James Smith, Mark Jeney, Jonah Ives, Newton Drury, Ebenezer Cooley, James Edwards, Daniel Stevens, Abel Stevens, Samuel Williams, Ezekiel Clark, Elihu Allen, Joseph Jackson.

28. Caverly, *History of Pittsford*, p. 124.

29. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, p. 733.

mander.³⁰ Mott had come to Neshobe from Richmond, Massachusetts in 1775 and was an highly esteemed man in his own town of Neshobe. He was deacon of the Baptist Church there and was a representative to the General Assembly as well as a lieutenant in Lt. Thomas Lee's company in 1776.³¹

Fort Mott was still under construction in November of 1777 when the two Robbins brothers, George and Aaron, of Neshobe were killed and scalped by a large party of Indians. The Indians were on their way to Pittsford to surprise the new fort and possibly demolish it, or at least test its strength. The two Robbins boys had been hunting early that morning with two other men from town, Peter Whelan and a man by the name of Carley. By the time they had come home to eat they were warned to run for their lives because there were Indians lurking in the swamp just north of their cabin.

Mrs. Robbins told the men that she thought there were only about six or eight. Both of the Robbins boys were professional hunters and excellent marksmen so when they heard this they were not particularly alarmed. They did, however, have George stand guard while the rest of them ate. It was not very long after this that the Indians appeared over the hill to the north. Evidently not many came out into the open at first for George risked firing a shot. As soon as he did a volley was returned, one of the shots hitting him. Aaron, Whelan and Carley rushed out to pick up George and pull him back to the safety of the cabin, but George told them to go on without him for he was dying. The three men then made a dash for the river and the woods on the other side. Aaron was the last to leap the river and was having trouble getting through the tangle of underbrush and alders on the opposite

30. Caverly, *op. cit.*, p. 122. Mott probably held command of the fort up until the spring of 1778 when Capt. Ebenezer Allen was placed in charge of the garrison. Records from the *Vermont State Papers*, Vol. 8, p. 388 show Allen to be in charge: "Neshobe 11th April 1778. Theas May Sartify to whome it May Consarne that I Rec'd 1007 of Board, Capt. Tuttle for the yous of my Detachment under My Command. Ebeⁿ. Allen Capt Comadent, £ 6:0:0.

"Neshobe 13th April 1778. Elisha Strong's Acct for Servis Don for the Public. To three Days work with three men and Eight oxen to transport three Barrels of Pork and three Casks flower Containing 95 lb N^t Wait Tare 93 ^{1b} and (illegible) from Rutland to Pittsford, at ten Dollars p^r Day for Each team (viz) two teams—£ 18:0:0 to two teeames with three men and eight oxen one Day to Cart hay from Neshobe to Pittsford for the fat Cattel that was for Capt Allens Department £ 6:0:0."

31. Hemenway, A. M., *Gazetteer of Vermont*, Vol. 3, p. 440. Goodrich, John E., *Revolutionary Rolls of the State of Vermont*, Rutland 1904, p. 14.

bank when he was hit by a tomahawk thrown by one of the Indians. He fell backwards into the river and they rushed up and killed him.³²

Carley was the only one to escape and spread the alarm, which was ultimately carried to Fort Mott. Peter Whelan, known as an "underwitted fellow," was caught by the Indians. It was supposed at that time, however, that Indians believed halfwits were protected by a god and that no harm could come to them. In any event Peter Whelan was released after the warriors had had a bit of fun with him. They sent him back to town in a pair of woman's stays laced on upside down and drawn so tight that he could not get out of them.³³

This party of raiders did not press on against Fort Mott even though they numbered approximately 150. It was thought in town that the Indians feared the Robbins boys had been an outguard for a larger group laying in ambush. Perhaps, too, they felt that the element of surprise so necessary to a successful assault on the fort was now gone.³⁴

Continuous massacres, kidnappings and forays led to the reading of the following report in Council at Arlington, in the Spring of the following year: "State of Vermont, In Council, Arlington, 22d Ap^l 1778. We have Rec^d a petition from the Inhabitants of the Towns on Otter Creek North of Pittsford dated April 13, 1778; and having Considered the Petition & their Circumstances do advise said inhabitants that as Soon as the Come within our Lines, they improve the Opportunity. It does not at present appear to this Council, that we can Guard further North than Pittsford & Castleton. Therefore you will Conduct yourselves accordingly. We shall give orders to the officers now Commanding our party to the North, & shall continue such orders to any officer Commanding by Commission under this State, to give all possible assistants to you in moving until to have had an opportunity to have come in, which if you do not improve you may expect to be Treatted as enemies."³⁵

After the fall of Fort Ticonderoga on July 6, 1777 the northern

32. Hemenway, A. M., *Gazetteer of Vermont*, Vol. 3, pp. 441-442.

33. Hall, Henry. Mss from the collection of. In the library of the Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier, Vt. Hemenway, A. M., *Gazetteer of Vermont*, Vol. 3, p. 442.

34. Hemenway, A. M. *op. cit.*, p. 442.

Henry Hall mentions that these Indians were in the vicinity of Neshobe most of the day, lurking about and taunting the townspeople to come out and fight.

35. Walton, E. P., *Records of the Governor and Council of the State of Vermont*. Montpelier 1880, Vol. 1, p. 252.

frontier shrunk southward. The Continental Army could no longer be responsible for those towns and people which were north of Fort Mott at Pittsford or Fort Ranger at Rutland. This last fort, built in the summer of 1778 just east of Gookins Falls on the Otter Creek, covered two acres, had a two story block house, and housed a permanent garrison. Another fort was eventually built between April 2nd and May 14th, 1779 at Castleton to form the western flank of a new defended frontier. This last fort was called Fort Warren in honor of Colonel Gideon Warren of Tinmouth, who was Colonel in the 5th Regiment of Vermont Militia at the time.³⁶

By February 25, 1779 the General Assembly had met, formed a Board of War and granted it powers to raise men in any number to defend the frontiers. From this time on the Northern Frontier became more than an imaginary line. By authority of the newly formed Board of War it was resolved on the 12th of March 1779 that "The west line of Castleton and the west and north lines of Pittsford to the foot of the Green Mountains be established as a line between the inhabitants and the enemy."³⁷

All the inhabitants north of this line were again told to move. However, the Board of War recommended "that the women and children should be removed to some convenient place south of the forts, and that the men with such parts of their stocks as might be necessary should remain on their farms, and work in collective bodies, with arms."³⁸

In spite of this warning the women as well as the men stayed in some of the towns north of the frontier. In Neshobe in particular the town records indicate that settlers were there throughout the Revolution, proprietors' meetings held and birth records recorded.³⁹

Before recounting the next Indian and Tory raid, which struck

36. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, p. 525.

37. Hall, Hiland, *Early History of Vermont*. Albany 1868, p. 284. From here on in this account the term Northern Frontier will mean that true line of defense between the inhabitants of Vermont and the enemy to the north—that line extending from Fort Warren in the west to the foot of the Green Mountains at Fort Vengeance.

38. Hall, Hiland, *op. cit.*, pp. 284.

39. *Brandon Town Records*, Vol. 1. Children born of Anna Simonds and Amos Cutler who were married Nov. 25, 1773: Jacob, born Aug. 18, 1774; Sarah, born Aug. 29, 1776; and Jacob, born Feb. 2, 1781.

Hemenway, A. M., *Gazetteer of Vermont*, Vol. 3, p. 443. Daughter born to Joseph Barker and wife during September 1778 in Neshobe; another daughter, Rhoda, born November 22, 1779.

in the Otter Valley and probably was the most extensive in the state before the burning of Royalton,⁴⁰ it is necessary to describe the method and effectiveness of Tory infiltration. The Tories were the Trojan Horse—the Fifth Column of the British. These men who had once lived as neighbors with the now rebellious colonists knew every house, road, bypath and hideout in their native towns. They were some of the cleverest and most effective fighters in Burgoyne's army—pilfering, burning, alarming and undermining the morale of the Vermont settlers. These Loyalists could often spy without being detected, for many Loyalists were non-belligerent and remained home on their farms secretly aiding the British cause by selling produce or information about the activities of the insurgents. Then, too, only about one third of the colonists in America were in arms at any one time, many of them fighting for a term and returning, thus making it even more difficult to tell a neighbor's sympathies.

I have been careful to indicate that up until this time nearly all the Indian raids showed signs of Tory leadership, association or origination. Usually these parties came directly from Burgoyne's headquarters on Lake Champlain or later from Canada via Lake Champlain. There were always plenty of Indians in each group and probably the bloodiest deeds were theirs, but the real conniving and best led raids were led by Tories who knew where, when and whom to strike. If they were afraid some of their old friends in their home town might recognize them they painted their faces to resemble the Indians.⁴¹

By May of 1777 some Tories had openly declared their sympathies and were making their way out of Vermont to join the British in Canada. One such party of Tories led by Benjamin Cole passed through Pittsford and Neshobe. Evidently Whig spies spotted them and spread the news, for Captain James Bently with a few others set out to capture them. On his way through the Creek towns Bently was able to recruit twenty-two new men.

Scouts had informed Bently that the Tories had gone as far as Monkton where they were camping in a deep pine woods on the outskirts of town. He waited until he thought them asleep and then he and his men rushed them, shouting and making a terrific noise at

40. On October 16, 1780 a party of 300 Indians led by a British lieutenant struck at Royalton—killed two persons, took twenty-five prisoners, burned twenty houses and as many barns, and killed 150 head of cattle, sheep and hogs. *History of Vermont*, Zadock Thompson (Part 2, pp. 68-69).

41. The sneak attack at Hubbardton on July 6, 1777, led by Sherwood, was made up of Tories painted to look like their Indian conspirators.

the same time. They took all thirteen of the Tories prisoners and the next day marched them all back to Neshobe where a special court convened to examine them.⁴² After two and one half days of investigation the prisoners were ordered to be delivered over to the garrison at Fort Ticonderoga. Captain Bently and his men marched them there.

Many of the raids and scouting tours up through the Otter Valley and particularly upon the towns of Neshobe and Pittsford were led by one of the most adroit and thorough Loyalists active in the British northern campaign.⁴³ It was the very Stevens who led the party of Indians in the burning and plunder of Neshobe on November 20, 1779 and in a series of incursions upon his own town, Pittsford, and the farms of his former friends and neighbors.

Roger Stevens, Jr. of Pittsford was the son of Roger Stevens, Sr. and one of a family of six children—Ephraim, Elihu, Moses, Merriam, and Abel. Abel also turned Tory like his brother, Roger, to be able to work in conspiracy with him. Their home was on the west side of the Otter Creek.⁴⁴

Roger came to know the country in the Otter Valley years before the outbreak of the War, for it was recorded in the town records of Neshobe as early as November 10, 1773 that Roger Stevens of Pittsford sold his right and title to land in Neshobe to one Abraham Hard of Dorset (then proprietor's clerk of Neshobe).⁴⁵ It was also stated in the clerk's records that, at a meeting held by the proprietors at the home of Nathaniel Daniels in Neshobe on September 6, 1774, they "Voted that Elisha Strong and Roger Stevens are to have the privilege of the Lowermost Falls on Neshobe River to build a Saw Mill and Grist Mill (the saw mill to go by the first of January next) and the grist mill to be built within two years from this date, and if accomplished within the Term of two years they are to have the privileges given them."⁴⁶

He evidently went off to war as a Tory before he finished either,

42. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 116. Trials for all Tories were usually conducted by seven men, selected from three different Committees of Safety, but in the case of this trial held at Neshobe only five men sat in: Thomas Tuttle, Timothy Barker, Jonathan Rowley, Moses Olmstead and John Smith.

43. For a more complete account of the activities of Roger Stevens, Jr. with the British in other adventures see Cruikshank, E. A. "Adventures of Roger Stevens" in *Proceedings of Ontario Historical Society*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 11-38.

44. Hall, Henry. Mss. from the collection of.

45. Brandon Town Records, Vol. 1.

46. Brandon Town Records, Vol. 1.

for later the following notation was entered at a proprietor's meeting on October 4, 1780: "Voted to choose a committee of three men to take care of the Mill Place in Neshobe where Roger Stevens partly built mills and to dispose of the privilege to some person who shall undertake for to build the mills with 5 acres of land around the falls where Roger Stevens set the saw mill."⁴⁷

When Stevens turned Tory at the outbreak of the War and joined the British, he left his wife and baby daughter at home in Pittsford to fend for themselves and take any ridicule the towns people might throw at them. Stevens relates his own position and his own sympathies in a memorial address to General Haldimand dated April 2, 1784. In it he described how he owned 3,000 acres of land in Vermont on which he had already built two mills and nearly finished a third.⁴⁸

He claimed to have been acquainted with Ethan Allen and to have played an active part in the great controversy between Vermont and New York over land patents. He had been elected by his neighbors to be a captain of a company of militia, but that he had refused to take an oath against his government which the Revolutionary Committee required. They then gave him six weeks to make a decision. But since he was unable to see it their way, his house was surrounded one night by armed men and he was taken a prisoner to Litchfield, Connecticut where other Loyalists were being held.⁴⁹

Stevens escaped from prison there and joined the army of General Burgoyne at his headquarters in Skenesborough (Whitehall, N.Y.) in July of 1777, and was immediately put in service. He acted as a guide for the German troops under Major General Reidesel in their move towards Castleton. Burgoyne used him to collect all the teams and wagons he could lay his hands on. Teams and wagons were desperately need for the portage from Skenesborough to the Hudson and Burgoyne chose Stevens to procure them because he knew the surrounding country so well. Stevens was so successful at his job that he was made wagon-master and cattle purchasing agent for the company and remained with the British army up until their surrender at Stillwater on October 17, 1777.⁵⁰

After the surrender he set out through the woods to make his way back to his family at Pittsford, but was taken prisoner again and placed with other Loyalists at Bennington. His brother Abel was able to

47. *Ibid.*

48-49. *Proceedings of the Ontario Historical Society*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 11.

50-52. *Proceedings of the Ontario Historical Society*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 12.

help him make an escape from here. However, since it was no longer safe for a Tory to walk in public, Roger Stevens gathered his family, along with William Campbell and his family (making up a party of twenty-three), and they all set off for Canada, arriving at St. Jean in March of 1778.⁵¹

Major Christopher Carleton was in command of the garrison at St. Jean and he found Stevens useful as a guide on exploring and foraging trips up Lake Champlain to Otter Creek. Stevens worked at this from October 24th to November 13th and nearly all his expeditions were successful. At this time, however, Stevens was perhaps playing a double game, hoping to find a better berth, because General Haldimand (through Carleton) was forced to warn him not to correspond with his brother Abel in Pittsford, except through friends of the Government (i.e. Crown).⁵²

Stevens' next sortie from there was in guiding a second expedition from Isle aux Noix under Carleton. They took Fort Ann, Fort George and many prisoners from both.⁵³

In the Spring of the following year on May 1, 1779 Lt.-Col. Robert Rogers (once of the famed Rogers' Rangers) had to recruit two battalions of able-bodied rangers from the colonies. Major James Rogers, younger brother of Robert, was to be in command of one of these two battalions and Roger Stevens was to be his recruiting officer. Stevens managed to enlist twenty-three men. Probably a large portion of these enlistees were made up from the prisoners taken at Fort George and Fort Ann, but undoubtedly many were recruited from the country he knew so well along the Otter Creek. Stevens was sent with his new recruits to Pointe au Fer on Lake Champlain to establish an observation post.⁵⁴ This was to be the most advanced outpost of the British for obtaining intelligence as well as more recruits from Vermont and New York. He was there for four months during the winter of 1780-1781.⁵⁵

Almost without exception, from the time he joined the British at Skenesborough until the close of the Revolution, Roger Stevens kept in touch with his brother Abel. Abel remained in Pittsford and continued his work as a professional hunter and trapper to avoid any suspicion. As a hunter he had opportunity to pass through the lines of

53. *Proceedings of the Ontario Historical Society*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 12.

54. For a more complete account of the activities carried on at Pointe au Fer see Walter Hill Crockett, *History of Vt.*, Vol. 1, p. 489.

55. *Ibid.*

the Committee of Safety with a pass which was good anywhere at any time. In this manner Abel kept his brother posted on the movements of the colonists, their strength and numbers, and their plans.

Numerous accounts substantiate the fact that Roger Stevens was leading most of the incursions in the Otter Valley. Caverly notes in his *History of Pittsford* that Roger Stevens often led independent parties as far up Otter Creek as Pittsford. On nearly every one of these sorties he would try to find a way to visit his family before returning.⁵⁶ Caverly also describes a small raiding party of British, Tories and Indians that came over from Lake Champlain to Pittsford in November of 1778. When the towns people learned they were on their way against Pittsford they all scurried to the safety of Fort Mott. The party went first to Roger Stevens' house where Mrs. Stevens was living alone with her baby daughter. An Indian seized the baby and was about to dash its head against the stones of the chimney when someone told him that the baby's father was in the British service. The historian then goes on to state (rather dubiously, if we are to believe Burgoyne's account of his Indians) that the red man smilingly handed the baby back to its mother and the whole party departed.⁵⁷

In this same year 1778 it was decided at a meeting of the General Assembly that all the personal property of men like Roger Stevens, who had deserted the cause of their country, was to be confiscated. The local Councils of Safety were to appoint a commissioner in their respective towns to do it.⁵⁸ It is quite possible the commissioner in Pittsford was Roger Stevens' own father for there is an entry in the records that Roger Stevens, Sr. procured \$1100.00 from his son's estate at his own expense and trouble and turned it over to the state. The entry is dated March 23, 1779.⁵⁹

Although the British had evacuated Fort Ticonderoga and Crown Point and Burgoyne had surrendered his army at Stillwater, the Northern Frontier was still open to the ravages of British, Indian and Tory guerrilla bands during 1778. On June 13th of this year a scouting party of 500 men were in the vicinity of Crown Point⁶⁰ and by fall a

56. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 148.

57. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, pp. 132-133.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

59. Nye, *State Papers of Vermont*, Vol. 6, p. 257. Mrs. Nye also has recorded an account of property sold in Pittsford at public vendue on Feb. 10, 1778 (just a month before Roger Stevens and his family left Pittsford for Canada). See p. 275.

60. Caverly, A. M., *op. cit.*, p. 131.

large British force had come up the Lake in several vessels and thoroughly scoured the country on both sides.⁶¹

By May of 1779 Fort Mott was altered and the commander informed by the officer in charge at Fort Ranger that a force was coming up Lake Champlain to harass the settlers. With all probability this was Roger Stevens moving up with his new recruits to the advanced British post at Pointe au Fer. A scouting party was sent out from Fort Mott to bring back intelligence. The leader of the party that left the fort was Ephraim Stevens, Roger's brother, and others in the group were Benjamin Stevens, Jr., Roger's cousin, Ebenezer Hopkins and Johnathan Rowley, Jr.⁶²

Although ordered not to cross the Lake when they got there, Ephraim led his men across in their canoe to Fort Ticonderoga. They were all young boys and probably curious so they spent some time reconnoitering the fort before paddling on down the Lake as far as Basin Harbor. They landed here and scouted about, but found no signs of Indians. In youthful glee they shoved off in their canoe all firing their muskets into the air. Almost immediately a party of Indians appeared on the shore and ordered them to come back. The boys refused while trying all the time to escape to the center of the Lake midst a shower of bullets. The Indians, however, had a canoe hidden along shore and so quickly pursued them. One Indian lay flat in the prow of his canoe and took a fixed aim. His shot hit young Johnathan Rowley in the head, killing him. The rest found that they were not going to be able to escape and surrendered. The Indians scalped Rowley first and then took their prisoners ashore. The three remaining boys were led through the woods in an overland journey, ultimately arriving in Quebec.⁶³

In the fall of 1780 the boys managed to escape, but were recaptured somewhere near the headwaters of the Connecticut River by Indians and brought back to Quebec. Again in the winter of 1781, after one unsuccessful attempt, they were able to break out. They traveled over snow and in severe weather until they were within one day's trip of Vermont. Here they met up with some British who sent them back to Quebec.⁶⁴

It was not until June of 1782 that Benjamin Stevens, Sr. heard that some prisoners were to be exchanged at Skenesborough. He still had

61. Smith, H. P., *History of Addison County*, Syracuse 1886, p. 581.

62. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, p. 734.

63-65. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, p. 734.

hopes of seeing his son again, so he went there. The first prisoner off from the boat was his son Benjamin. Ephraim Stevens and Ebenezer Hopkins were also exchanged at the same time.⁶⁵

The second raid on Neshobe fell on November 20, 1779⁶⁶ and was the second most destructive Indian raid in the state—second only to the burning of Royalton. It is difficult to find out how much of the town was destroyed, but probably all of the houses east of the Neshobe River. By comparison with the Brandon of today the loss seems slight, as there were only about eighteen to twenty families at that time (though they ran large, with sometimes as many as ten or twelve children). But with the threat of recurrent attacks on other towns, the loss and danger was none the less real. The raiders set fire to the homes and out buildings of Captain Thomas Tuttle, his son, Solomon Tuttle and his son-in-law, Joseph Barker. They also plundered and stole all their food, clothing and livestock. Even the mills on the Neshobe River that had been partially built by Roger Stevens and Elisha Strong were burned. Barker, himself, was taken a prisoner, but managed to slip away when the Indians had camped for the night and his two guards had fallen asleep.⁶⁷

Mrs. Barker fled from her house with her fourteen-month-old daughter in her arms in the direction of the home of Noah Strong, about three miles away. However, at dark, finding herself completely exhausted before she had gone half of the way, she spent the night in the deserted cabin of George and Aaron Robbins. That night she gave birth to a daughter and it was here that Captain Tuttle and the others who made up the small searching party found her the next day.⁶⁸

66. I have given the date, which has never been stated before, as Nov. 20, 1779 on the basis of the accounts in mss. from the Henry Hall collection in the Vermont Historical Society and also from records in Goodrich's *Revolutionary Rolls of Vt.* Hall states that it was on the night following the raid that Col. Claghorn and his men pursued the Indians. Goodrich gives the day of the arrival of Capt. Wright's Co. as two days after the raid. (Goodrich: "A pay roll of Capt. Simeon Wright's Company of Militia in Col. Gideon Warren's Regiment for an alarm at Neshobe for 3 days in the month of November ye 22d.")

67. Hemenway, A. M., *Historical Gazetteer of Vt.*, Vol. 3, pp. 442-444.

68. "In the account of this affair (the burning of Neshobe) as published in Thompson's *Gazetteer* there is an error as to the time when it occurred. It is there stated to have been in 1777, at the time when the Robinses were killed, whereas it was two years later, as is shown by the record of this extraordinary birth. Besides, the only other child she had, then about fourteen months old, was born in Sept. 1778, nearly a year after the Robinses were killed. The time of Mrs. Barker's marriage too, being Jan. 13, 1777, as appears of record, is sufficient

The raiding party undoubtedly came up Otter Creek, or along the Indian Trail which bordered the Creek, for only those homes which were not far distant from the waterway and in a direct line with Fort Mott were burned.

The day after the surprise attack on Neshobe and the burning of the town, the news had spread over half of the surrounding country—quite a feat considering the means of communication and transportation. By night men and soldiers had come from Clarendon, Timmouth, Castleton, and East and West Rutland. They came up to Neshobe along the east bank of the Creek through Pittsford.⁶⁹ A great deal of the existing town must have been burned and the repercussion great to cause such wide spread agitation and alarm.

When the men gathered that night (November 21) a general meeting was held and they discussed the situation. Proposals were put forth as to the best means of overtaking the enemy. As the night drew on the gathering increased to a force of 400 men and James Claghorn of Rutland was in command. Claghorn held the commission of Lieutenant-Colonel from the governor; however, in spite of whatever previous notoriety he held as a military man, he had been called up in such haste this time that he had neglected to make provisions for supplying rations and canoes for the men. The Indians had escaped to the west side of the Creek and the canoes were needed for ferrying the men across.

In spite of the lack of preparedness the men were anxious to get started and did not want to wait until Claghorn could remedy his carelessness. They trudged along the eastern bank of the Creek all night trying in the darkness to find a place to cross. Joshua Pratt, one of the men from West Rutland, asked Colonel Claghorn:

“You will be sure the canoes get down, won’t you?”

Claghorn answered: “We know our own business.”

“You do, or ought to,” said Joshua.

to settle the question.” (Miss A. M. Hemenway in her *Historical Gazetteer of Vt.*, Vol. 3, p. 443.)

“It was in November or December of 1779 that the enemy might have been taken when Brandon was burned if Clagon (Claghorn) had done his duty as I have often been credibly informed by some of those who were present and by one not many years passed a Wm. Jerimust Parker who said he was with Clagon (Claghorn); who lived in Whiting but is now dead.” (Caleb Hendee of Pittsford in a letter to Henry Hall of Rutland, from the collection of mss. in the Vermont Historical Society.)

69. Hall, Henry, Mss. Collection of. In the library of the Vermont Historical Society.

Claghorn, however, had a reputation for being inefficient and the men had suspicions of his not wanting to overtake the enemy.⁷⁰

In the meantime one Benjamin Cooley and another Cooley (Ebenezer?) went back the four miles to Pittsford to get two canoes and return with them.

While the Cooleys were gone the other men tore boards off from a barn on one of the Creek meadows and made a raft to ferry themselves across on. On the second trip across, Silas Pratt, Joshua's brother was just stepping off when the raft started to sink with twelve other men aboard; in another minute it went to pieces. They all managed to get to shore through the icy waters except for one man who could not swim. He kept himself afloat by lying across a board, but the current was rapidly carrying him down stream despite his calls for help. However, some of the party managed to run out a long stick to him and pull him ashore.

The men were so mad at Claghorn for his negligence in not procuring canoes in time that they called him "Granny" Claghorn and when marching behind him would tread on his heels and do anything else that would hurry him along.

At sunrise they approached Brown's Camp in Sudbury.⁷¹ They all stopped on top of a hill overlooking the camp, inspected the priming of their guns and then made a rush down the hill. Unfortunately, the Indians had gone just about an hour before the men arrived. The men felt that the rally had been in vain—the enemy had slipped away from them leaving the air full of feathers, and hogs both killed and still in their pens. Hardly any of the precious meal they had stolen was carried away with them. As the party looked back across the Great Swamp and the lowland meadows towards Neshobe they could see the still burning hay stacks and the flaming and smoking ruins of the cabins of the homeless families.⁷²

James Claghorn must have lost all the respect of his men and many of his countrymen after his fiasco at Neshobe, for he was taunted in public on many occasions afterwards. Elijah Smith who had been with

70. Hall, Henry, Mss. Collection of. In the library of the Vermont Historical Society.

71. Brown's Camp was located in Sudbury on the west bank of the Creek at the foot of Miller Hill, a few rods north of where the covered bridge now stands. There was a good spring there and the site was probably a fine camping place within easy access of the great highway of the French and Indian War—The Indian Trail, along Otter Creek.

72. Hall, Henry, Mss. in the collection of.

Claghorn said: "I have often seen the tears run down the cheeks of brother Daniel and Nathaniel Blanchard, talking about the escape of the Indians who burned Brandon. They blamed Claghorn chiefly, Sawyer some. If they had commanded the scout the Indians wouldn't have escaped."⁷³

Silas Pratt, who had fallen into the Creek that cold night, said: "The next spring we dropped Claghorn and elected Thomas Lee of Rutland, Lieutenant-Colonel."⁷⁴

On November 22nd a relief company was sent to Neshobe and it stayed in the area for three days. It was a company of Colonel Gideon Warren's Regiment and had been sent to try and locate the enemy, and also to stand by to protect the town from any further incursions if the Indians should return. Captain Wright and the regular lieutenant of this company were absent at the time, so Ensign Nathaniel Blanchard was placed in charge.⁷⁵

Evidently this raiding and burning of Neshobe caused a great deal of unrest and fear among the towns lying on or directly behind the Northern Frontier. It is noted in the record of the Board of War, which met at Arlington on April 7, 1780: "Resolved that the Board accept the report of their Committee respecting building a fort at Pitsford, &c.

"Resolved that said fort be built near the north line of Pitsford where Majr Ebenr Allen shall judge proper; That said fort be a Piquet with proper flankers, sufficient for one hundred and fifty men Inclosed; That such fort be accomplished as soon as may be."⁷⁶

Almost immediately the men in the Pittsford-Neshobe area began work on a new fort, larger and better situated and stronger than Fort Mott. It was located upon high ground due east of Fort Mott and

73. Hall, Henry, Mss. in the collection of. In the library of the Vermont Historical Society.

74. *Ibid.* Henry Hall has preserved two other accounts of Claghorn. Once when he was visiting in Tinmouth, Major Rice twitted him of cravenness and Claghorn tried to lick Rice for it, but he ended up by being beaten himself.

Another time when the militia were drinking at the tavern of John Hopson Johnson, near Fort Ranger, to celebrate the election of Thomas Lee as their new commandant, Claghorn came up to Lee and told him that when the regiment met for action it would be Claghorn who would take command.

"You will, will ye, Claghorn?"

"Yes I will!"

"If you do, I'll draw my sword and hew you as Samuel did Agag."

75. Goodrich, John E., *Revolutionary Roll of Vermont*.

76. Walton, E. P., *Governor and Council*, Vol. 2, p. 28.

almost directly upon the eastern branch of the Crown Point Road. It was a picket fort with a trench five or six feet deep surrounding it. Trunks of beach and maple trees, about twelve to eighteen inches through and about eighteen feet high, were pointed at the top and set into the ground. They were set as closely together as possible, but to make sure that there were no gaps a stake was wedged in between each log. Although Fort Warren at Castleton was the nominal headquarters on the Northern Frontier, the fort at Pittsford was every bit as strong and every bit as important.⁷⁷

Behind the pickets was a breastwork of mud and logs six feet broad and at a certain height in this breastwork loopholes were left between the logs so that a muzzle of a gun could be pushed through when taking aim. However, the holes were made high enough so that even if the enemy were firing from directly below the shots would pass harmlessly over the soldier's head in the fort.⁷⁸

On each corner of the fort was a two story flanker with loopholes above and below. On the east side there was a large double gate of oak planking studded with large nail heads to make it bullet-proof, and on the west side was a wicket.⁷⁹

Inside the fort against the north wall was the officers' barracks; directly opposite on the south wall was the enlisted men's barracks; and in the northeast corner was a small frame building used expressly as an ammunition magazine. The parade ground or drilling area lay between the two barracks. In the northeast and southeast corners were wells. This was a decided improvement over Fort Mott where the soldiers had to crawl down the bank of the Creek for water.⁸⁰

When the fort was completed Major Ebenezer Allen was placed in command with a garrison of one hundred and fifty men. Up until this time the fort was known only as Pittsford Fort, but Henry Hall preserved the following anecdote to describe the manner in which the fort received its final name.

Caleb Houghton, aged thirty, one of the soldiers comprising the garrison under Major Allen, left the fort one day unarmed to visit a neighbor's house. He never returned, but as Houghton had bragged among the men that he would never be taken alive by Indians and allow himself to be put to their torture, a party of men was sent out from the fort to look for him.

Houghton was found about a half mile from the fort. He had evi-

77-79. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, pp. 735-736.

80. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, pp. 735-736.

dently been ambushed for a shot had been fired so close to him that the wadding was still in the wound. He had also been tomahawked, scalped and run through with a sword. When Major Allen learned of this atrocity he was so outraged that he sent a searching party out for several days, but they were unable to locate the enemy.

It was at this time that Major Allen gathered his men together at the fort in front of the large double gate on the east side and declared vengeance against all and every Indian that came within his power. He then took up a bottle of rum, stepped forward and dashed it against the studded gate, at the same time christening the new fort, Fort Vengeance.⁸¹

It is difficult to ascertain when the fort was fully completed; perhaps it went up by stages, covering a period of years, but being used to some extent at all times. Smith and Rann set the date of completion as 1780⁸² but the Board of War meeting at Arlington on July 14, 1780 “. . . granted 5 fatigue men to assist the Barrack's Master at the fourt on the North Line of Pitsford” in making 20,000 brick to build chimneys in both the officers' and enlisted men's barracks.⁸³ And even as late as June 23, 1781, the Board met at Bennington and considered the removal of Fort Vengeance back to the old site of Fort Mott⁸⁴ (hardly an economical measure if Fort Vengeance were already built).

This same year (1780) the Board of War took extra measures to link the Northern Frontier more securely, and on April 7th at Arlington: “Resolved that a Picquet fourt with proper flankers be built at Hubbardton near Boardman's place where Majr Ebenr Allen shall pitch; that there be Barracks sufficient for seventy-five men Inclosed; to be completed as soon as may be.”⁸⁵

81. Hall, Henry, Mss. in the collection of.

82. Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, p. 736.

83. Walton, E. P., *Governor and Council*, Vol. 2, p. 35.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 109. “We the subscribers being desiared by the Hon^{ble} Bord of War to visit the frontiers of the State of Vermont and report wherein our opine the garrisons ought to be built for the best defence of the above State.

“Begg leave to report first that the garrisons at Pitsford ought to be removed back from the place where it now stands nigh Sutherland's mills or such particular spot as Col^o Fletcher shall direct. . . . That the fortification at Castleton as it is most likely will be considered Hed Quarters ought to be much the largest . . . (Signed) Roger Enos, Samuel Fletcher, Samuel Herrick, Gideon Armsbury.”

85. Walton, E. P., *Governor and Council*, Vol. 2, p. 28. There seems to be no evidence that this fort ever went beyond the planning stage.

An alarm was received at the new Fort Vengeance on March 23, 1780 and it lasted until March 28th. Captain Benjamin Cooley's Company from Colonel Ebenezer Allen's Regiment was called out. This was only the first of many alerts and actual attacks to be felt in the Otter Valley in 1780.⁸⁶

During the month of May of this same year the enemy came up Lake Champlain and attacked the country in the region of the Mohawk Valley in New York. The governor of New York and the Albany Militia set out for Lake George hoping to intercept the British on their return. In the meantime the governor had sent an appeal to Major Ebenezer Allen, as well as to the officers in command of the militia in and near Castleton to join him at Ticonderoga. This alarm lasted from May 30th to June 6th.⁸⁷

By July the Indian and Tory marauding parties were again around Pittsford. This time they took Isaac Matson a prisoner to Canada.⁸⁸

Again the Indians and Tories returned in July. This time it was definitely proved that the Tory leading this party of four Indians into Pittsford was Roger Stevens, Jr. These raiders had been hiding in ambush behind a rock so that when Samuel Crippen rode by on horseback they were able to jump out and seize his horse. The Indians cut the horse's throat and then smeared the blood over their hands and face. Samuel Crippen was pulled behind the rock and held prisoner there.

A few minutes later Mrs. Joshua June and her sister Betsy Cox came along each on horseback. Mrs. June had her baby son in her lap. The Indians and Roger Stevens rushed out from behind the rock and tried to catch both of them. Mrs. June who was riding in front managed to escape. Betsy Cox, however, was captured and her horse's throat cut too. The party then took Crippen and Miss Cox with them northwards over Cox Mountain in order to steer clear of the fort. They were making their way toward a camping ground about a mile north-east of Neshobe.⁸⁹

Roger Stevens persuaded the Indians to release Betsy Cox, but warned her to return home slowly. Shortly after she was out of sight of them she met up with a fierce looking Indian fully armed and acting as a rear guard for the retreating group. When he saw the food she was carrying, given to her by the others, he took it from her as a sort of pass and let her go on her way.⁹⁰

86.-88. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, pp. 158-159.

89. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 161.

90. Hall, Henry, Mss. in the collection of.

When the news of this abduction was known, Captain John Spofford was sent with an additional force to protect the inhabitants in that area. Captain Spofford's men remained on the alert from August 4th to August 18th. They set out after the retreating Indians and their Tory leader, but were never able to catch up with them. Crippen therefore reached Canada a prisoner.⁹¹

By the fall of 1780 the committee on the frontiers was able to report (on October 16th) that there were about one hundred and fifty men in garrisons at Pittsford and Castleton, but that four hundred men ought to be raised immediately, of which three hundred and fifty should be assigned to Pittsford and Castleton.⁹² This was proof enough that Neshobe and Pittsford and that portion of the Otter Valley were still on the main highway of invasion from Canada. Otter Creek was the silent water route and of course the Old Indian Trail (incorporated in the Crown Point Road in 1758) passed along the west bank of the Creek near Fort Mott, made a ford and rose up the hill past Fort Vengeance.

Through the winters most of the towns were able to rest from war as passage from Canada was too difficult. Travel by snowshoe or even upon the ice of Lake Champlain or Otter Creek was cumbersome at best. But with the arrival of spring the Indians, Tories and British came out of winter hibernation. In May of 1781, Jabez Olmstead of Pittsford saw Indians lurking about in the woods all day and he rather feared to go home that night. When he did he found his home destroyed. He went to the fort for help and a band of men quickly left in pursuit of the enemy. However, while they were off searching for the Indians, the Indians had either outwitted them or else a small group stayed behind, for the fort was attacked. There were only three men inside, the rest being the women of the town that had gone there for protection. They are said to have held off the siege successfully.⁹³

It is possible that it was at this time⁹⁴ that Captain Benjamin Cooley was on duty at Fort Vengeance and that he received the note from Roger Stevens, Jr. In this note to Cooley, Stevens declared that he was in the vicinity at the head of a scouting party of Indians and Tories and wanted an interview with Cooley. He told the Captain to come to an appointed place at a certain time wearing his side arms and that he (Stevens) would be unarmed and would meet him as a friend.

91. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 161.

92. Walton, E. P., *Governor and Council*, Vol. 2, p. 43.

93. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 170.

94. The date given by Caverly is the year 1781—no day or month.

The interview was a long one and during it Stevens told Cooley that he supposed the townspeople did not think very highly of him for remaining a Loyalist, but that he felt it his duty. However, he claimed that he had done many unknown favors for his old Pittsford neighbors and that when the Indians had taken prisoners he had saved their lives, relieved them of any undue sufferings that they might have undergone, and often helped in their release. Even bragged that the Indians had once wanted to kill Cooley but that he had deterred them.⁹⁵

Attacks, sorties, scouting parties, etc. continued into the summer, and in June a large force of Indians under the leadership of the Chief of the Caughnawagas, Tomo (also known as Thomas Orakrenton), planned to attack Fort Vengeance. The assault was set for night, but it was discovered in time. Captain Brookins lay in ambush with his men and the entire party of Indians was forced to retreat. In the course of the skirmish Chief Tomo was wounded in the leg.⁹⁶

These series of attacks unsettled the colonists in the Otter Valley and a real feeling of fear and hesitancy can be read beneath the lines of the report found in the Assembly Journal for February 14, 1781: "The line of defense on the west side of the Green Mountains be established at the forts of Pittsford and Castleton, by no means to be drawn further to the south unless by urgent necessity by the opposition of a superior force of the Enemy &c. and that a committee be appointed on the west side of the mountains by this Assembly with full powers to remove the line from Castleton to the narrows of the Lake or elsewhere if it shall be found proper to act in conjunction with the troops from N. York if any such should arrive at the narrows &c."⁹⁷

95. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 175. It is interesting to note—in connection with Capt. Benjamin Cooley, his position throughout the war, and the location of his home in Pittsford—the following advertisement found in a newspaper in 1793: "There is a young woman in this town who says she was taken somewhere in the forepart of the last war, when and where she cannot tell, being a child when taken; it is conjectured by some, that it was from Brandon, in the state of Vermont, if that should be the case, and her friends have a mind to look her up, she may be found at Capt. Manning Bull's in Westfield between Granville and Fort Edwards . . . her name is supposed to be Cooley." (*The Farmer's Library or Vermont Political and Historical Register*. Rutland, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1, 1793.)

96. Caverly, A. M., *History of Pittsford*, p. 170.

97. Walton, E. P., *Governor and Council*, Vol. 2, p. 74. This same visiting committee for the Northern Frontier for the Board of War at Bennington suggested on June 23, 1781: ". . . That the fort to be built at Skenesborough (at the narrows) ought to be built on a small hill where one Wilson lives or North-

Spying, raiding and burning were carried on right up until the end of the Revolution. We are able to get a special insight of the method of one spy from the following quotation from a letter written by the Tory Roger Stevens, Jr., in a report to Captain Matthews (General Haldimand's secretary): "I have agreed with my brother Abel Stevens (a Loyal Man and entirely unsuspected among the Rebels) to bring intelligence in the following manner vizt,

"He being a great hunter and entirely in the confidence of the ruling men of the frontiers is to procure a general permission to hunt when and where he pleases. Mr. Curtice of Pittsford is to take the papers, intelligence &c. from Doctor Oldin and Mr. Merwin and give them to my brother who has engaged to bring them to New Haven Falls on Otter Creek, where I have engaged (by the Generals permission) to meet him on the 20th day of February (1782)."⁹⁸

A sequel to this is described by Captain Justus Sherwood of the Loyal Rangers⁹⁹ in a letter to Captain Matthews. ". . . I sent Mr. Stevens with Wright to meet his brother at Pittsford with his reports from Rhode Island, Boston, &c. Mr. Stevens has gone with the Furr's to his Brother who is to proceed with them to Springfield, Hartford, Rhode Island, and Boston to enquire the numbers and situation of the French troops in Rhode Island in particular and in America in general, the state of Washington's army and the general plan for the ensuing campaign . . ."¹⁰⁰

west about 5 or 6 hundred yards as Col. Walbridge shall direct, Taking into Consideration the conve'cy of Water." (Smith & Rann, *History of Rutland County*, p. 526.)

98. *Ontario Historical Society Proceedings*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 16.

99. Capt. Sherwood led the Indian and Tory raid on Hubbardton July 6th and 7th, 1777.

100. *Op. cit.*



Lights and Shadows

IN EARLY CAVENDISH

By MERRILL D. WHEELER

ONE who seeks a brief escape from the turmoil of the world of today would do well to follow a zigzag trail up the steep side of a ravine in Cavendish, Vermont, until he comes to the last resting place of the old settlers. This secluded spot is entirely theirs. No new-comer has come among them for more than one hundred years and nothing will be found that does not belong to the past: the rude stone walls, the rough headstones, the uneven turf, the pious epitaphs, the old Yankee names—all are of bygone generations.

Having so recently left a rollicking brook in the valley below, the visitor is pleased and soothed by the peace and quiet that reigns about him on all sides. Perhaps the early settlers also felt the charm of the little clearing in the forest that was to be their eternal home. One of the headstones gives a hint of this, the inscription reading:

Lucy, wife of Enos Baldwin, died in the City of Albany, N. Y., Oct. 28, 1807, in the 27 year of her age, and was removed to this place soon after.¹

When one thinks of the long, rough road through the forest, the slow jolting ride on cart or sled, the nights of waiting along the way, it seems that some strong feeling must have been at work. It could not have been a desire to bury Lucy beside those who were near to her by blood, for none is to be found in the cemetery to this day.

Near at hand by the eastern wall is another grave of much interest, if not of mystery. It stands alone, the only gravestone facing eastward. The inscription reads:

Henry Procter, died June 19, 1778, age 51.

1. Lucy was the daughter of Aaron and Lydia (Spaulding) Parker. She left an able husband in Albany and an infant son who was successful in business—was once candidate for Governor in Connecticut. See *History of Baldwin Family*.

thus indicating that it marks the first burial in Cavendish, earlier by eight years than any death of record.

Who was this lone man of mature years, and what brought him into the wilderness when only three families were living in town? A little research has thrown some light on this subject, taking us away from the seclusion of the little cemetery, away from Vermont, then back again, to one of the oldest, best known farms in town.

Henry Proctor was not closely related to others of that name who were to live in Cavendish. He was the son of Gershom Proctor who, in his day, had been a well-to-do citizen of Chelmsford, Mass. Gershom had owned slaves as well as land and other property. He had also been one of the proprietors of a land bank which issued currency on the basis of land and bonds, until suppressed by an Act of Parliament as unsound in principle and inflationary.

While Gershom Proctor was a man of note in his community, it cannot be said that he or his son, Henry, enjoyed the full approval of the more conservative elements in Chelmsford, certainly not of the First Church. The following extract from the church records, as published in the town history, shows how they offended:

November 4, 1743—Whereas of late ye churches of This Land have bin much Infested with Lay Exhortors, and Some ministers who have left their own Parishes & Charges, and undertaken To play ye Bishop in another man's diocese, To The great disturbance of Towns and Chhs. and to ye breach of Christian Communion, in such places where they have Come; and Whereas This Town and Chh. have been sorely disturbed by ye Conduct of such persons coming among us and preaching & exhorting In private houses without Consent of ye Stated pastor Of the Chh.

And Whereas One Pain, a Lawyer belonging To ye Colony of Connecticut, hath very lately bin Introduced into ye Town by John Burge & Gershom Prockter, Two of the Bretheren of This Communion and Invited by em and Allowed To Exhort In their houses To the offending of the greatest part of ye Chh.

Therefore, at ye motion and request of Abraham Byam & Peletiah Adams, Two other Bretheren, a Chh. meeting was Called and accordingly having met This day—After Prayer To God to Guide & lead us unto things wch. make for Peace—The Chh. proceeded to Question John Burge and Gershom Prockter with respect To this Affiar and They gave The Chh. Satisfaction by Saying They were Sorry that They had so done, and designed not To do so again. . . .

Having thus humbled the men, the Church then proceeded to call the women to account before a meeting. If the reader thinks that Colonial women were demure and obedient, he should prepare for

a surprise. "Diverse female members," among them Rebecca, wife of Gershom Prockter, acted in a "Very Audacious manner . . . [and] Justified their Conduct!" In deed they behaved so badly that it became necessary to dismiss them from the church forthwith!

Years later—some sixteen years later in the case of Rebecca Proctor—a number of these errant "Females" acknowledged their fault and were taken back into the church.²

Unfortunately the lull in strife over religion was short-lived. The Baptist movement in Chelmsford came back with renewed vigor and Gershom Proctor was again one of its leaders. In 1772 this sect bought a church building on the Westford side of the line. When the identity of the purchaser became known, says the *History of Chelmsford*, the building was robbed of its pews and furnishings. Nothing daunted, the Baptists came in the night with oxsleds and hauled the building on the snow crust directly to its new site in Chelmsford, on or very near the farm and home of Gershom Proctor.

In January of 1778, after the death of his parents, Henry Proctor sold home and land in Chelmsford for 2376 pounds, a large sum in those days, sufficient to insure a good living in such a well settled community. But Henry chose to forego the comforts of his home at the age of fifty years and to subject himself and family to the hardships of pioneer life in an undeveloped section of Vermont, then known as the New Hampshire Grants. He bought 1076 acres of wild land from the original grantee at the price of 600 pounds. Well chosen, the tract included within its bounds two of the best farms of Cavendish, long known respectively as the Wheeler and the Densmore farms.³

In coming to Vermont, Henry Proctor made a fateful decision and must have been moved by compelling motives, probably a strong desire to get away from a scene of religious strife and perhaps, also, an unwillingness to pay rates for the support of a church he did not care to attend. It is significant that a number of his associates in the Baptist movement followed him to Cavendish, among them Dr. Asaph Fletcher, who became the first physician in town and a leading citizen of the new state of Vermont.²

Dying in June of 1778, Henry Proctor did not live long in Cavendish but it is supposed that he spent much of the winter there. It is strange that no record can be found of the administration of his rather

2. *History of Chelmsford, Mass.*, by Wilson Waters.

3. Land Records of Middlesex County, Mass. and of Cavendish, Vt.

large estate, either in Massachusetts or Vermont. A deed to his land in Cavendish was signed in Massachusetts a year after his death, evidently in confirmation of an informal transaction that had taken place before he left for Vermont.

Members of Henry Proctor's family lingered in Cavendish for a number of years after his death. It was undoubtedly his widow who married Nahum Powers in 1784, and his two sons, Henry and Gershon, were landowners in town in the early 90's. His daughter Rebecca, then living in Woburn, Mass., sold, in 1788, two thirds of the land in Cavendish, the property of her father, Henry Proctor, deceased, to Levi Stevens, a member of an enterprising family of that name in Townsend, Mass.⁴

The new owner made a good start. The site of his log cabin may still be seen in the west pasture of the one-time Wheeler farm on Twenty Mile Stream and a large house with a peaked roof, built in 1797, stood in place of the present farm house until it was destroyed by fire in 1883.⁵

But there are signs that Mr. Stevens did not continue to prosper. He had a wife and thirteen children in his family and sold tracts of his land from time to time until finally, as if to liquidate a debt, the farm passed into the hands of four local men who soon sold it to the Reverend Joseph Brown of Alfred, Maine—little suspecting the comedy that was in the making.⁴

Shortly before the day set for making payment and taking over the newly purchased farm, Reverend Brown started out on horseback from his home in Maine. In his saddle bags was the purchase price, so much in bullion, so much in bank notes—\$800.00 in all.

We may suppose that the good man began his journey in a hopeful mood. Behind him was a scene of trouble and sorrow. He had been minister in Alfred four years and had seen fit to give up his church three years previously. Shakers and other radicals of the day had caused great dissension by their proselyting and offensive agitation. Finally, during the current year, 1811, his wife Rebecca had died.

4. Cavendish Records.

5. Traditions of the Wheeler Family, Cavendish, Vt.—Daniel Wheeler, who finally became owner of the farm, was living with his uncle, Willard Spaulding, of Cavendish when Rev. Joseph Brown came to town. Anna, wife of Willard Spaulding, was a sister of Joseph Brown; other sisters living in Cavendish were Mary, wife of Colonel Samuel Wyman and Rebecca, wife of Josiah French. For information about the families of Joseph Brown and Levi Stevens see *History of New Ipswich, N.H.* by Chandler and Lee.

In Vermont, then a new state in its boom period, the Reverend Brown had good reason to anticipate a much happier experience. There were no threats of quarrels over religion in Cavendish and he would be welcomed in that town by three sisters, all wives of leading citizens, and by other Congregationalists whose pastor he was to be for many years. Yes, he was assured of a welcome in Cavendish and of a good home there, but what about a mistress for it, a mother for his two children, an aid to him in his pastoral duties and in many other ways? Surely there were attractive girls in that growing town who would consider it an honor to be the wife of a minister of the gospel, a man of some education and of good family. While we cannot be sure that such thoughts were with the traveler on his journey, we do know, as will later appear, that they came to him a little later.

Arriving in Cavendish after several days on the road, the Reverend Joseph Brown reached the farm at the specified time and found the people of the neighborhood on hand to witness the change in ownership by "turf and twig," this being in accord with an ancient custom that prevailed when the written word was not trusted or generally understood. Among them were the Bateses, Bonds, Proctors, Smiths, Spauldings and probably young Daniel Wheeler, the Conants, Frenches, Hutchinsons, Pages, Scotts, Stileses—men, women and children.

After greeting his new neighbors, many of whom were to be members of his church, Reverend Brown took the saddle bags from his horse and brought them into the east room of the farm house where he began to count the money. He counted and recounted the gold, silver and bank notes but one note was constantly missing. No end of searching and checking brought the missing note to light. His Reverence was perplexed and greatly upset. He was certain that the full amount of money had been placed in the bags and the disappearance of any part of it was a very great mystery indeed. It was also most embarrassing to be in this position at his first meeting with the people of Cavendish, but nothing could be done. The frustrated man was compelled to return to Maine without paying for the farm in full.

The loss of the money was disturbing to the people of the neighborhood also, because many considered it to be a reflection on their honesty. It became so distressing to one William Bond that he journeyed to Plymouth to consult a conjurer of that town. Unable to return with Bond in person, the conjurer was willing to tell him what to do to solve the mystery, namely: cause the people to re-

assemble and to bring to them the great bible and key of the Meeting House. Bond was shown how to suspend the bible from the key by means of a cord and was taught a jargon which each man was to repeat while he in his turn held the bible by means of the cord and key, well up in the air in the sight of everybody. The innocent would have no trouble in holding the bible in this manner, said the conjurer, but the guilty would let it fall.

Certain that he had the means of detecting the guilty party, Bond rushed home and called a meeting of the people of the neighborhood, convincing them that they should submit to the test.

The beginning was without event. Several men met the test in triumph but when James Bates, the local blacksmith, seized the key and began to repeat the magical words, the bible fell violently to the floor to the astonishment of many. Mr. Bates was a man of good repute, one of the joint owners of the farm being sold. His wife and daughter wept copiously and he appeared to be greatly disturbed himself.

After the confusion had subsided a little, it was proposed that the test be continued and the bible was held by others without mishap until Mr. James Smith, an outstanding citizen, dropped the bible to the amazement of the people; later, Mr. Proctor, another leading citizen and joint owner of the farm, similarly failed in the test!

At this stage Bond, a small, nervous man, became greatly excited. He had expected that some lowly fellow would be exposed by the test and frightened into admitting his guilt. The exposure instead of three joint owners of the farm, all men of substance and influence, was more than disconcerting—it was alarming. What would the people think of the test and what would these strong, shrewd men do? While hot and bothered by the course of events, Bond met with another surprise that was most disturbing. Some inconsiderate person suggested that he, the instigator of the test, should submit to it in his turn. This was not according to plan, considering all the trouble he had taken it seemed ungrateful, but the people insisted and he could not refuse.

Seizing the key Bond raised the bible from its resting place, well in sight of everybody, trembling with excitement the while. He began to mumble the prescribed jargon and then disaster overtook him. The good book broke loose and fell to the floor with a crash, to his intense distress and that of his family.

The frantic man proclaimed his innocence to the high heavens but

the people were not impressed. They could not believe that the three leading citizens would stoop to petty theft but it was conceivable that Bond, who was favored neither with much of this world's goods nor sound judgment, might have yielded to temptation. Why had he taken on himself the task of detecting the thief unless he aimed to hide his own guilt by throwing suspicion on others?

The meeting broke up in confusion and poor Bond departed for his hillside farm, bewildered, discouraged, shamefaced. Conscious of his own innocence and good intentions, he felt that he had been badly used by his neighbors whose good name he had tried so hard to preserve. Whether his faith in conjury waned at this time we have no means of learning, but it must have occurred to him that the conjurer who had been "unable" to attend the meeting in person was a man of discretion, much too sagacious to challenge the intelligence of the early settlers of Cavendish. They were by no means an ignorant, superstitious lot, as the future was to demonstrate. In the little group that stood for the test were several keen, understanding men whose sons inherited qualities that brought them great wealth, professional reputation, a seat in the Governor's chair, in the U. S. Senate and in the Cabinet of a President. Could the magic of the conjurer have told him as much?⁶

But no man was to suffer loss or incur disgrace because of the missing money. Shortly after the day of the test a letter came from Maine. It told how the Reverend Joseph Brown had taken another look into his saddle bags after returning to his home and there, to his great astonishment, was the bank note that he had overlooked in Cavendish, to the grief and confusion of many!

And then it came out that Bond had been the victim of a plot. The three men who had dropped the bible, sceptics one and all, had done so intentionally in order to make a farce of the test and to have a little fun at the expense of the superstitious little busybody in their midst.

The purchase of the farm was duly consummated and "Priest Brown" as he came to be known, made it his home for sixteen years. He died in 1840 and the Congregational Society of Cavendish also came to an end at about that time. It is not known that he ever threw any light on his strange failure to see the ten pound note, but the mystery was explained by curious people somewhat as follows:

As intimated previously, this middle-aged widower had a variety of hopes and interests in Cavendish. When he arrived in town with

6. Redfield Proctor, Riland Fletcher, Richard Fletcher, James H. Bates.

business in mind and met the people who had assembled at the farm, his quick eye caught the pretty face of Lucy, the daughter of Benjamin Proctor. It was a case of love at first sight. Matters of business lost much of their importance at once as did the sorrows of a widower. This was in April of 1811; in November of that year, say the Cavendish records, the Reverend Joseph Brown and Lucy Proctor were joined in matrimony. Is it strange that the fast-working pastor was unable to see a mere bank note while his heart was pounding like mad and his eyes were dazzled by the first sight of his future bride?



Notes and Documents

THE BLOODY SEVEN DAYS' BATTLES

Edited by GEORGE A. MACDONALD

The Army of the Potomac during the Peninsula Campaign in northern Virginia engaged in one of the most fiercely contested conflicts of the Civil War. From June 26, 1862, until July 2, 1862, the Bloody Seven Days' Battles raged less than ten miles north of Richmond. This conflict did not receive the publicity which was accorded other battles because Richmond, the ultimate goal, was never realized. The heroic behavior of the Union and Confederate Armies during this phase of the war is worthy of a more detailed account than has hitherto been accorded it.

Historical publications bring within reach of everyone the official reports of the various campaigns and battles of the Civil War, but they deal only slightly with individuals and their motives, with small units and seemingly unimportant battles, and, for the most part, leave the trials, hardships, and virtues of the troops largely to the imagination.

Since one finds that romance and personal adventure do not appear in the pages of history, it then becomes apparent that for a more individual and humane treatment one must look to other sources. One source, which often proves most interesting, is, of course, letters from soldiers to their friends at home. These deal not with armies, grand strategy, and generals, but with regiments, companies, and fellow brothers-in-arms of the writers, upon whose shoulders focus all the pain, misery, and hardship of war. Such letters contain the burden of history, but receive little recognition.

The following letter is one of these tributes to brave action in battle. It was written by Sergeant John F. Cook to Olin K. Harvey of Passumpsic, Vermont, and it has the uniqueness of being one of the most vivid accounts of the Peninsula Campaign yet discovered. With the author's graphic portrayal of the incidents of the several battles, his keen observation of detail, and his lively sensitivity to the feelings

and actions of others, the letter transports us to the battlefields of 1862, where we too experience fatigue, scorn the "rottgutt" of the Rebels, and commend the "sober man to fight."

Harrisons Landing; Va. July 18 1862.

Friend Olin:¹

Your wellcome² letter, wich bears for its date the 13 inst., I received by this mornings mail. As you mention nothing in particular of your folks, I take it for granted, that all are in the enjoyment of good health. Your papers, you say state, that we had quite a hard time before Richmond.³ Well my friend I can assure you, that a hard time it was indeed. It would be useless perhaps, for me to give many particulars, as no doubt you are ere this pretty well informed of all principle events of the bloody "seven days" fighting, but after all, the papers do not verry often, say or know much about the thousand little accidents, dangers, and hairbreath escapes, that happen and are only known in fact to those, who are actually engaged in the carnage of the battlefield. Perhaps it will prove interesting to you, if I should mention to you, a few in this letter.

For two days the battle raged in all its fury on the east side of the Chickahominy,⁴ there on the 26th of June the battle of Mechanicsville was fought, and on the following day that of Gaines Mills, our Division, (Smiths)⁵ was quartered on the west side of that river, directly opposite of Gaines Mills, and while all day in line of battle, momen-

1. Olin K. Harvey, the recipient of the letter, was born in Barnet, Vermont, August 31, 1836. Less than two months after he received this letter he enlisted in Company F. 15th Vermont Regiment. He was killed in action at Fairfax Court House, Virginia, on December 29, 1862.

2. The letter is reproduced with its original punctuation, word order and spelling.

3. The author refers to the retreat of the Union Army from the base of supply at White House Landing to Harrison's Landing, Virginia. A clear account of this retreat may be found in George T. Stevens' *Three Years in the Sixth Corps*. A vivid picture of the battle from the Southerners' viewpoint is found in Douglas S. Freeman's *Lee's Lieutenants*. Other accounts of this battle may be found in the following: Francis A. Walker's *History of the Second Army Corps*, Eckenrode and Conrad's *George B. McClellan*, and in (Vol. VI) of James Schouler's *History of the United States*.

4. See map, p. 235.

5. Major General William F. Smith from St. Albans, Vermont, was in command of a division during the Peninsula Campaign. Among the units of his command was the famous Vermont Brigade which included the 3rd Vermont Regiment.

tarely expecting an attack on our position, we witnessed the whole of that days terrible work. During the night, while our forces fell back, the rebels placed batteries into position and on the next morning opened on our camps. They done but little damage, and while most of our artillery, during the previous night, had been removed to the rear, we slowly fell back out of their range, into the woods. The rebels however knew, by lessons we had learned them in the past, that Smith's Div. was a rather saucy one to deal with, and consequently they deemed it not prudent to follow us verry rapidly. In fact nothing was again seen of the *devils*, untill in the afternoon of Sunday, at Savage's Station. This is a railroad station in a large field, surrounded on three sides by woods, in the opening on the fourth side, 20 pieces of our artillery were placed in line, all masked with bushes excepting two of them, wich boldly stood out, glittering in the sun. Behind these, lay our infantry on their faces, invisible to the foe.

At three o'clock P.M. the rebel skirmishers advanced from the woods on the opposite side of the field, and soon after their black columns came on, at double quick, yelling like demons, intending to take our guns. Not a shot came from our side, untill the rebels were to within about 100 yards of our batteries. Quicker than lightning, our guns were unmasked, and each laden with a double charge of canister, they opened on their lines. Great God! Olin, what a sight! they fell in heaps, and the way they put back to the woods, was a caution to see. But soon a heavier force came on again, but the same fate awaited them. For the third time they came on, fairly covering the field with their hordes, but this time they fared worse than before, fearfull was the slaughter wich our canister made in their crowded ranks, but as soon as they got up allmost to the mouth's of our guns, up rose our infantry and more than 10,000 rifles were emptied into their allready thined ranks. In terrible confussion they brocke and run, and with fixed bayonets, and a yell that seemed to shake the verry sky, our boys charged after them. At this time the rebels appeared in the woods on our left flank, the Vermont brigade was immediately ordered in, and in a few minutes we were engaged. It was now nearly sunset. But by the time it was dusk, we had whipped the rebels completely of the field. Our Capt. (Thos. Nelson)⁶ had three toes shot off his left foot, early in the fight, but he stood through the whole of it like a hero.

6. Thomas Nelson was born in Ryegate, Vermont, January 15, 1816. He was commissioned captain June 11, 1861, and was severely wounded on June 29, 1862, at Savage's Station. He was promoted to major on June 15, 1863, and was mustered out of the service on July 27, 1864.

Six more were wounded in our Co. and one killed. I am unable to give a full list of the casualties in our regt. or brigade, no doubt you will get it in some of your papers. The loss of the 5th Reg't. was heavy. The loss in our Reg't. would have been severer, but as we mostly laid down, loading while lying on our backs, and then rolling over and firing, the rebels shot over us. Fortunate for me, I did not get hurt. One ball went across my breast, and as it passed through my breast pocket of my shirt, it tore to pieces one half of a picturecase, I had in my pocket, hurting however neither myself nor even the face of the picture. Quite a close call; I thought. I could tell you of many more instances, like or similar to the above, but I have no room here. During the following night, we marched all night, and on Monday morning arrived on the other side of the *White Oak* swamp. In the afternoon the rebels attacked us again, but they got another thrashing. And so it has been all along; in the daytime we fought, and at night we marched, until at length on the evening of the second of July, we arrived on the James River, weary, tired, and worn out. For five successive days and nights I never for a moment had my belts off, and did not get ten hours sleep in all. I leave it for you to judge, whether this would be called a hard time. A great many fell out on the road; some have since come in, others no doubt have been captured by the enemy's cavalry. Our camp is now some four miles from the river, on high ground, and we are already strongly entrenched. We have a splendid position, and the rebels will get a warm reception, should they attack here. Our old position had a front of some 30 miles; in order to hold it, we ought to have had, three times our number.

But as there was no prospects of getting reinforcements, our Gen. knew that it would be useless to try to hold it: consequently we fell back. In what stile we accomplished our change, and reached our new base of operation, history will tell, all I have to say is: "I am proud that I belong to the Army of the Potomac."

After the battle at *Savage's Station*, I went for a few minutes over the battlefield. The rebels lay there in rows, in some places three and four thick, legs and arms lay scattered in every way and the wounded lay groaning, covered with the dead, and unable to get out. There was a strong smell of rum, and on picking up some of their canteens, I found that in most of them, was some rotgut. The fact is Olin, they were nearly all drunk, and this accounts for their boldness in walking up almost to the cannons mouth. Give me however a sober

man to fight; liquor may deaden a mans senses to danger, but when you come up to hand to hand work, a drunken man can do no execution; he'll do verry well to be shot down. I have since seen from the Richmond papers that they themselves admit a loss of 8,000 in that battle, I know it was much larger, while we did not lose one sixth part of that number in killed and wounded.⁷

My friend, I could write a dozen more sheets over, and then not get half through, but as my letter is allready quite lengthly, I will close. I hope the states will answer promptly to the late call for more troops, and then this rebellion will soon end.

I see by the papers that Vt. leads the van, and I am glad to hear it. I have been unwell for a few days back, but today I am somewhat better. Our Captain has gone home. It has been verry hot of late, and quite sickly, but the health of the boys is rapidly improving. Give my best respects to all of your folks as well as all inquiring friends. Hoping you will answer as soon as possible I will close; while I remain as ever

Your true friend

John⁸

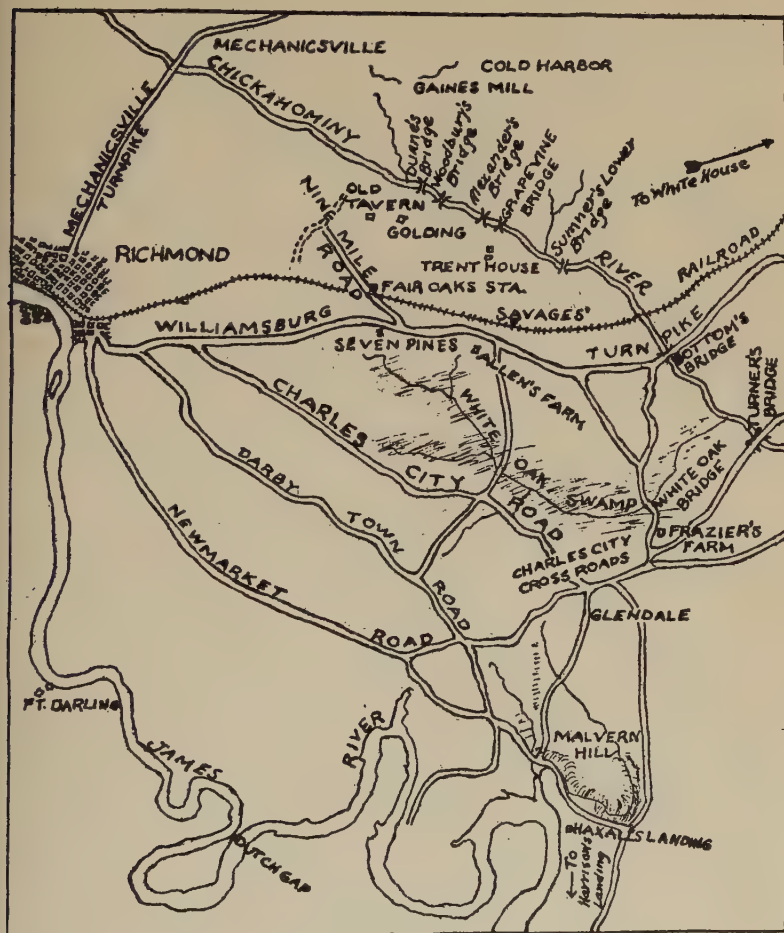
Sergt.^s John F. Cook
3rd Vt. Regt. Co. I
Smith's Division
Army of Potomac

The letter deviates from the conventional in the respect that its description of the battles as a common soldier saw them is rare. It is difficult to ascertain whether Cook deliberately failed to acknowledge defeat, or whether he was not aware of the fact that his army had just suffered a series of setbacks and narrowly escaped a crushing defeat, which, had it occurred, could quite possibly have changed the entire outcome of the war. It is possible that Cook was endeavoring to raise the morale of those at home by not becoming discouraged himself. His letter exemplifies confidence, strength, and "esprit de corps." The

7. The losses of the Army of the Potomac during The Bloody Seven Days' Battles were as follows: killed 1734, wounded 8062, missing 6053: total 15,849.

8. John F. Cook was born in Hardwick, Vermont. He left as a private with the 3rd Vermont Regiment at the time it was mustered into service. He was promoted to sergeant on June 1, 1862. He rose from private to the rank of major during his service. On May 12, 1864, he was severely wounded, but recovered. He was discharged from the United States Volunteers April 8, 1865.

personification of these qualities was a necessity during that crucial period when the outcome was in doubt, and it reflects great credit on the author and all men of his kind.



POSTSCRIPT

New Format

With this issue we complete our first year in a new format. It was with some trepidation that we departed from the original cover typography designed by a master in that field, Mr. Vrest Orton. However, Mr. Orton redesigned the old cover for use as a title page, and we adopted the pictorial cover now in use, with regular drawings by Edward Sanborn illustrating some article within.

We were pleased to have the approval of others for this decision. While in attendance at the 1947 Convention of the American Association for State and Local History at Glenwood Springs in September, Dr. Jay Monaghan, Director of the Illinois State Historical Society, announced the results of a competition among the historical magazines of the country with regard to typography and make-up. In its new dress the *Vermont Quarterly* tied for first place.

The convention itself opened up many new possibilities in the field of local history. The American Association for State and Local History is an increasingly active organization from which all Vermont Historical Society members would profit. Membership is \$3.00 a year (\$5.00 for institutions) and includes subscription to the helpful *Bulletins* and *State and Local History News*. Write to Secretary Earle Newton at Montpelier for further information.

Lake Champlain Conference

The annual joint gathering of the New York State Historical Association and the Vermont Historical Society for a Lake Champlain Historical Conference was resumed June 28 of this year, at the Fleming Museum on the campus of the University of Vermont, Burlington. Visitors and members from both sides of the Lake were welcomed by President John S. Millis.

The principal address of the morning session was given by Judge Berne A. Pyrke of Crown Point, New York, on "The Century Farms of the Champlain Valley," and by author Frederic F. Van de Water on the "St. Albans Raid." Descriptions of the work of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum, and of the new Vermont Historic Sites Commission, as well as of the Henderson-McIntyre papers in the Headquarters House of the New York State Historical Association were given. Professor Leon Dean of the University faculty talked informally on the writing of historical fiction.

In 1948 the Conference will be held on the New York side of the Lake.

Freedom Train

One of the most exciting events of the year not only for historians but for Vermonters as a whole was the arrival of the Freedom Train, with its precious cargo of the great documents of the American heritage. Over 10,000 people went through the Train in each of Rutland, Burlington, and Montpelier.

The day the Train arrived in Montpelier there appeared along the line of march into the train a display of copies of the American documents on the Train, alongside copies of parallel documents of Vermont history. There was also a sign explaining that these were only copies of originals on exhibit in the museum of the Vermont Historical Society. Directional signs carried the people from the exit of the Train into the Museum. The Society was kept open until 10:00 P.M., when the Freedom Train closed its doors. By that time 5,447 people had gone through the Museum, more than in the biggest *month* in our previous history.

The exhibit itself included manuscripts and papers which had never before been assembled together. Alongside a large copy of the Declaration of Independence was the famous Bennington Declaration of 1775. Beside the United States Constitution was one of the rare copies of the original Vermont Constitution. In connection with the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment, special attention was drawn to the provision in the original Vermont Constitution abolishing slavery within this state. On display was the letter transmitting the 13th Amendment to Vermont for ratification, signed by Abraham Lincoln. This is one of the very rare examples of his full signature.

Also loaned by the Secretary of State was the original letter from George Washington congratulating Vermont on her admission to the Union in 1791, as well as the agreement with New York which made it possible.

Attracting the greatest attention was the original Stephen Daye Press, for aboard the Train was the Bay Psalm Book, first book published in what is now the United States, and printed on this very press. The Psalm Book was recently sold at auction for \$151,000, the highest price ever paid for a rare book. A facsimile was on exhibit, along with a photograph of the copy on the Freedom Train and other memorabilia of Stephen Daye.

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